

[REDACTED]

The Honorable Raymond J. Dearie  
United States District Court Judge  
Theodore Roosevelt United States Courthouse  
225 Cadman Plaza East, Room 1185  
Brooklyn, New York 11201-1818

Dear Judge Dearie,

Hoping this letter finds you in good spirits and good health. I stand before Your Honor humbled and desiring mercy from this Honorable Court. Your Honor, I have had a long journey in my short life, most dramatically, I went from an Islamic extremist to a cooperating witness. A New Yorker who had no real sense of what this country stands for, it would take prison, exposure to many different people, their beliefs, both good and bad, and a much better understanding of American culture to realize that the tolerance by America and freedoms of Americans is the heart of its greatness, and a beacon of light for those with hope in their hearts. As I am learning so much about America, I ask this Honorable Court's indulgence to learn about me.

My family was driven from their native land Afghanistan, during the early 80's due to the war with Russia and civil war. Their emigration to Pakistan would deprive me of a normal life in Afghanistan, my family's home. Conditions were very difficult; my family was poor, they lived in tents, and on food rations while in the refugee camp. I was born in 1985, though as an infant I would not know the hardship my parent's suffered. There were no schools or governmental services available in the camps. My father had left to go to [REDACTED] and then to America. I would see him only once and speak to him two or three times over the next fifteen years.

When I turned nine my family moved to Peshawar, Pakistan where we lived until I was fifteen, then we moved to New York. My father had sponsored my immediate family to come to New York in 1999. We lived in a one bedroom apartment, my father worked twelve hour days driving a taxi.

I went to school for three years and then began work. Like my father I worked twelve hour days, moving from one minimum wage

job to the next.

Coming to America was the greatest moment in my life. Life in Pakistan was poverty, hardship, helplessness. The sense of safety, meeting family, previously unknown to me, making new friends, enjoying movies, driving, television, parks, sports, foods, opportunities, was all a God send. I became a die hard fan of all the New York teams. With peace, safety and stability in my life I dreamt of one day owning a business, home, to travel, and to provide for my family. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I was very happy. In retrospect I was living the American dream.

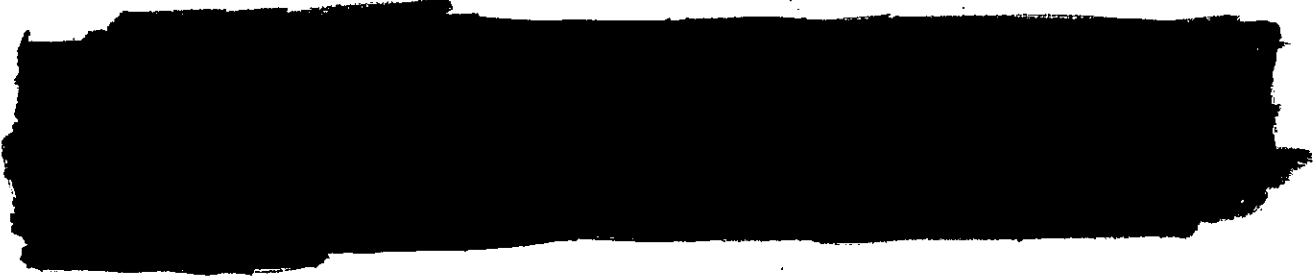
When the attack of the World Trade Center occurred I was very upset, actually devastated by the event. And I supported America's declaration of war against Afghanistan several months later, my concerns were in living my own life.

Around 2007 I had met two guys I had went to school with: Adis Medunjanin and Zarein Ahmedzay. Adis had encouraged me to join in religious activities; going to the mosque and Islamic studies. Adis also introduced me to the teachings of Anwar Al-Awlaki on the internet. Awlaki's message was jihad, to become a fighter against the United States to defend Afghanistan. I watched hundreds of lectures, was seduced by them, they became my only source of guidance, and I trusted only Adis, Zarein, and Awlaki. The memories of the stories I heard about Russia's war against Afghanistan came to mind and I assumed the United States war with Afghanistan was as horrible. Awlaki had won my sympathy and instilled rage within me. His twisted and corrupted teaching of the Quran, I accepted, for I did not know better. At some point I recognized Awlaki as a Islamic scholar. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] At my most extreme I believed the United states was on a mission to destroy all of Islam. Awlaki's messages of the "end of times" raised a sense of urgency in me and I felt it necessary to engage in Jihad (fight against America), because I believed the world was about to end. If I did not act to protect Islam I would be doomed forever in the afterlife. Quranic prophecy was cited convincing me the armies flying the black flag were foretold and they are the warriors of God. And wrap all this in honor; to defend one's self, their country, and their family. Throughout his lectures Awlaki would cite Quranic verses that were appropriate to persuade Jihad, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Awlaki warned forcefully that in the mosques were many informants. There was no other source of information. At this time in my life I had never read a complete book, religious or otherwise. I had only read the Quran in Arabic, but my understanding of Arabic was very limited, my native language is Pashto. I kept my thoughts and feelings to only a few close friends who were just as gullible and ignorant as me.



Looking back, I can now see how gullible I was, actually living in an imaginary world. Your Honor, the uneducated are perfect targets for the unscrupulous. They take historical facts and contort them to their agenda, to motivate people to their will. My lack of education and the reverence surrounding Awlaki, an Islamic scholar, was enough to cause me to believe. And believe I did, for I nearly took my own life and the lives of innocents. But now I battle back with knowledge, I read diverse books on general knowledge and am constantly getting a deeper understanding of Islam, reading many different texts.

Briefly, the Quran says,

[I]f anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land -- it would be as if he killed all of mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all of mankind. Surah 5:32.

Your Honor, the Quran teaches much deeper treatment of fellow Muslims and non-Muslims, that being equal treatment. The Quran is clear on this matter and I am dumfounded that the knowing pursue the injustices and corruption of their fellow Muslims. In sum I believe a previous verse teaches, the justice to which Islam invites her followers is not limited to one's country, tribe, race, or religion, but applies to everyone equally.

Your Honor, living this day with the knowledge that I did not take the life of an innocent person is a great reward. My

greater and new found understanding of the Quran teaches one who kills an innocent or a believer, "will not even smell the fragrance of paradise."

In addition to my deeper understanding of Islam and the Quran I have kept myself busy and have engaged in many constructive activities during my incarceration. I am proud to say I have attained my G.E.D. and sixteen certificates in courses offered by the Bureau of Prisons. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Believing as I do, in the future I will continue to assist law enforcement in any way that I can. Try to foresee those being corrupted, as I was, to teach them the true Quran and protect them from the internet propaganda, and put them on the right path. [REDACTED]

Lastly, Your Honor, please accept my humble and sincere apology for my horrible choices, the judging of others, and poor judgment.

Respectfully yours,

Najiballah Zazi